

Members

Sen. Sue Landske, Chairperson
Sen. Marvin Riegsecker
Sen. Joseph Zakas
Sen. Anita Bowser
Sen. Frank Mrvan
Sen. Earline Rogers
Rep. Ralph Ayres, Vice-Chairperson
Rep. Mary Kay Budak
Rep. Don Lehe
Rep. Scott Pelath
Rep. Charlie Brown
Rep. Duane Cheney
Mayor Daniel M. Klein
James Pettit



NORTHWEST INDIANA TRANSPORTATION STUDY COMMISSION

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: September 13, 2006
Meeting Time: 10:00 A.M.
Meeting Place: Purdue Technology Center of Northwest
Indiana, large conference room
Meeting City: Crown Point, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Sen. Sue Landske, Chairperson; Sen. Marvin Riegsecker; Sen. Joseph Zakas; Sen. Earline Rogers; Rep. Ralph Ayres, Vice-Chairperson; Rep. Mary Kay Budak; Rep. Don Lehe; Rep. Scott Pelath; Rep. Charlie Brown; Rep. Duane Cheney.

Members Absent: James Pettit; Mayor Daniel M. Klein; Sen. Frank Mrvan; Sen. Anita Bowser.

Commencement of the Meeting

Sen. Sue Landske, Chairperson of the Commission, called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. (central time).

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

Sen. Landske first asked **Dan Gardner**, Deputy Director of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) (www.nirpc.org), to begin his presentation.

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

Mr. Gardner distributed two documents to which he referred during his talk: the Executive Summary of the Connection 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (Exhibit 1) and a NIRPC memorandum by Ken Dallmeyer dated September 11, 2006, urging adoption of an amendment to the Connection 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (Exhibit 2).

Mr. Gardner began by reporting that the Connection 2030 Regional Transportation Plan has achieved air quality conformity with the state implementation plan of the federal Clean Air Act.

He continued by describing some of the projects that NIRPC has been active with during the past year, including:

- the West Lake commuter rail expansion;
- Phase II of the Marquette Plan; and
- the Major Moves legislation.

In addition, NIRPC continues to work with constituent governments and has been working closely with the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) since the RDA's inception, providing clerical and technical support to the RDA as the RDA was getting under way.

Mr. Gardner also stated that NIRPC has a contract with Bill Sheldrake to assess how NIRPC should work with the various stakeholders in northwest Indiana, which is anticipated to be completed by the end of October.

NIRPC is also advocating with the Indiana Department of Transportation, added Mr. Gardner, to increase the priority of regional highway projects on the Department's list of funded projects.

Mr. Gardner indicated finally that NIRPC is looking for opportunities to support intermodal transportation projects in northwest Indiana.

Mr. Gardner also provided the Commission with two issues of NIRPC's newsletter to which he did not refer: August 2006 (Exhibit 3) and September 2006 (Exhibit 4).

Regional Bus Authority

Sen. Landske next recognized **Ken Dallmeyer**, Project Director for the Regional Bus Authority (RBA) and former NIRPC staff member.

Mr. Dallmeyer spoke about the following aspects of the RBA:

- service;
- organizational structure;
- financing; and
- the transition between numerous small independent bus operations to a coordinated system.

Mr. Dallmeyer used several poster-sized regional maps throughout his presentation that are not available for inclusion with these minutes. However, for informational purposes, Mr. Dallmeyer did distribute a background piece on the Northwest Indiana Regional Bus Study (Exhibit 5) and a copy of the first issue of the RBA newsletter (Exhibit 6).

Mr. Dallmeyer began by speaking about the RBA's service plan. He said that at this time the

RBA's planning for Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties is focused on creating a skeleton for regional expansion. Mr. Dallmeyer provided an overview of possibilities for community services, some of which could be circulator services that remain within a community. Valparaiso, for example, he said, has been looking at the possibility of two routes connecting shopping centers and running past social services providers. In addition to fixed routes, the RBA is interested in providing more flexible services, such as routes that change orientations depending on time of day or demand-response services.

Mr. Dallmeyer then commented on the developing RBA structure. He said that there are varying degrees of commitment to the idea of a regional bus service within the communities of northwest Indiana. There are people with vested interests in the continuation of systems as they now exist. Other people would like to use the RBA to improve their existing service. And still other communities, he added, would like the RBA to take over a substantial part of responsibility for providing bus service in their communities.

With regard to financing, Mr. Dallmeyer told the Commission that the RBA will probably need more money. He said that the RBA's predecessor organization had been looking at a food and beverage tax. However, he was not able to give the Commission a specific target for the funding that the RBA will require.

Finally, on the process of making a transition between numerous small independent bus operations and a single coordinated system, Mr. Dallmeyer described for the Commission the significant political challenge in building a consensus among the various stakeholders.

Vice-Chairperson Rep. Ralph Ayres asked whether bus routes are going to South Shore stations, and if so, whether the bus schedules are closely linked with the South Shore schedule. Mr. Dallmeyer responded that the bus routes do go to the South Shore stations but that the schedules are not closely linked. Rep. Ayres suggested that it would be advantageous for the bus routes to be closely linked with the South Shore schedule.

Sen. Landske asked whether the RBA was having any difficulty in getting a quorum for Board meetings. Mr. Dallmeyer indicated that getting a quorum was an ongoing challenge. He suggested that the General Assembly could assist the RBA on this point by reducing the number of Board members.

Before proceeding to the RDA, Sen. Landske drew the Commission's attention to a brochure of the Central Indiana Commuter Services, a federally funded program operating in central Indiana to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion by promoting carpooling, vanpooling, and riding the bus. See Exhibit 7. She suggested that a similar program in northwest Indiana might be a desirable component of the region's transportation strategy.

Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority

Sen. Landske next invited **Tim Sanders**, Executive Director of the RDA, to begin his presentation.

Mr. Sanders began his remarks by telling the Commission that the vision of the RDA is to develop a world-class economy in northwest Indiana.

Mr. Sanders said that one of the most frequent questions he is asked concerns when the RDA will be able to begin spending money. The RDA statute, he said, does not allow the RDA to spend money until the RDA's strategic plan is approved. However, he said that he did convince Indianapolis to allow him to spend some money on planning. One of these projects

involved funding the RBA's Regional Bus Study that will allow the RBA to develop a Strategic and Operations Plan.

In addition, Mr. Sanders continued, the RDA has made a commitment to disburse \$7.8 million to the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) for the purchase of additional railroad cars, which will serve as the local matching portion to leverage an additional \$31.2 million in federal funds.

Mr. Sanders mentioned two more proposals that the RDA is working on. He said that the RDA has received a \$20 million proposal to open up the Lake Michigan shoreline for public access from the East Chicago Marina to the Gary casino boat docks. And the Gary Chicago International Airport has also asked for \$20 million for expansion of the Airport, which would leverage another \$80 million in federal funds.

The RDA's next meeting, said Mr. Sanders, is on October 3, 2006, and he hopes that the RDA Board will be able to approve one of the bidders for the RDA strategic development plan.

Sen. Earline Rogers asked Mr. Sanders whether he would like to see any changes to the RDA legislation. Mr. Sanders responded that he does not see a need to make changes to the RDA statute for the time being, but he would like to see a reconstituted Lake Michigan Shoreline Development Commission. He explained that the Shoreline Development Commission is large and, consequently, has no ability to make a quorum. He said that he would like to see a smaller, more workable Commission to deal with recreational initiatives. He added that the RDA can do the work in the short run, but a long-term solution would be preferable.

Mr. Sanders also provided the Commission with an RDA brochure to which he did not refer during his presentation. See Exhibit 8.

Conclusion of the Meeting

After conferring with the other Members of the Commission, Sen. Landske set the next meeting of the Commission for Wednesday October 25, 2006, at 10:00 a.m. (central time) at the Gary Chicago International Airport in conference room of the administration building, if available.

Sen. Landske declared the meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.